GEOGRAPHY

This section deals with what the people of Ifalik know about the resources of their island. It seemed possible to find out what they know by watching them and asking questions, without calling on the array of specialists that would have been necessary to describe the island in terms of what we know. Yet the expert help just acknowledged proved necessary in order to translate their knowledge into terms intelligible to our science. Besides, it proved possible now and then, with this help, to test the accuracy of their knowledge and find some of its limitations.

To begin with some concepts that form a framework for their knowledge, no general names were found for 'number', 'space', or 'time'. This suggests a boundary to the degree of abstraction which their tools for thinking allow them. Within these limits, they are at home with all three concepts."

28: Spiro--111-112
116, 153, 861, 626

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians-1-4
Ifalik

"Social scientists have recently stressed the fact that imitation alone does not explain social and cultural learning, that such learning involves a system of rewards and punishments, the former serving to reinforce positive responses, and the latter serving to extinguish the wrong responses. On Ifaluk the punishments are quite definite and tangible, whereas the rewards are diffuse and mostly psychological in nature. In other words, rewards are seldom in the nature of 'Presents.' The simple cultural fact is that there is little possibility for the concept of 'present.' In a culture in which each family is an economic unit, almost entirely self-sufficient, each such family manufactures what every other family has so that there is no division of labor which results in exchange of goods. The child, therefore, cannot be offered something which the family does not already possess, and what it does possess are his for use anyway. Presents in the form of material goods would merely be an addition of something the child already has--some extra food, a larger basket, a new loin cloth--important, but not important enough so as to act as a dynamic agent in the learning process.

This leaves two other rewarding factors operating--praise and privilege. Privilege, too, is an unimportant factor, for again, given the cultural and geographical facts--the reality situation--there is little in the way of special privilege that the child can receive for good behavior. Any cultural goods the society has to offer are received automatically by the child as he matures. Such privileges as being able to listen to the

radio, to see the movie, to go for an automobile ride, etc. do not exist. Others, such as being able to stay up late at night, to go with his parents to a party or to the home of a relative are not special privileges. They are his as of right. No Ifaluk parent ever bribes his child, therefore, with the promise, that if you do such-and-such, I will permit you to do so-and-so. The pattern of reward and/or privilege following a meritorious deed is therefore, absent from this culture.

The only category remaining under reward is praise, and this is employed. The child who conforms to the social expectations, or who does something particularly meritorious, or who acquires a skill, is praised not only by his parents, but by all adults. The positive dynamics in learning, therefore, is the desire to be praised, the desire for the euphoria that accompanies the feeling of being accepted, the emotional security that comes from having pleased one's elders and merited their praise.

But this, apparently is not enough. There are negative sanctions that are even more important than the positive, though, to be sure, they may be viewed as the obverse side of the motivational coin. If one desires praise and security, one avoids blame, rejection, and ridicule. Ridicule and its resultant feeling of shame is probably the strongest factor operative in the Ifaluk learning pattern. There are, as we shall soon see, six specific punishments with which children are inflicted--almost all of which elicit shame and rejection responses rather than physical pain. Positively, then, it is the knowledge of being loved for doing the right thing--emotional security--that motivated good

behavior. Negatively, it is the feeling of being rejected, of not being loved--emotional insecurity--that soon eliminates bad behavior. 'If you do that', or 'if you no savvy that, you all same dog or pig' is the kind of ridicule that both shames the child and makes him aware of his implicity rejection by his parents. But this is not enough. There are six negative sanctions that are employed to punish the recalcitrant child, all of which, according to the children's confession, are distasteful, and should be avoided. These are being beaten,[112] spat upon, thrown in the lagoon, confined to the house, threatened with an alus, and scolded.

The child is beaten with a coconut-leaf, never with the naked hand. The actual physical pain involved, as I can testify, is slight. Being spat upon, of course, involves no physical pain at all. Being thrown into the ocean is not physically painful, though it might induce fear--fear of octopus or shark or an alus of the sea. There is no fear of drowning, since he is thrown in shallow water. Being scolded involves no physical pain, nor does being threatened with an alus, though the latter does elicit fear, for the alus, it will be remembered, causes illness. Confinement involves no physical pain, but is extremely frustrating. The children have complete mobility within their district, and being shut-in works a greater handicap on them than it would for an American child. It is the psychological experiencing of the punishment, as rejection, shame, frustration,

that is the dynamic force behind the punishments.

The following table is a statistical tabulation of the punishments reported by the children, giving the number of children who named any one punishment. Some named many, some none.

Table II

Number of subjects: 42
Male : 25
Female : 17

Punishment	No. of subj.	% of subj.	% of M.	% of F.
Beating	35	83	88	76
Spitting	22	52	56	47
Thrown in ocean	18	43	56	23
Confinement	18	43	44	41
Threatened with Alus	17	40	56	18
Scolding	14	33	24	47